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NJMC Sets Economic Growth Agenda

Plan for the next 12 months lays groundwork to handle future growth

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission today outlined an aggressive agenda to continue fostering the economic growth of the 32-square-mile Meadowlands District over the next 12 months. These plans will ensure the Meadowlands area is poised to meet the needs of the area's growing economy over the next 15 years.

"This economic plan follows the initiatives outlined by Governor Corzine for the State of New Jersey and will continue to demonstrate that economic development and environmental protection can coexist in the Meadowlands," said NJMC Chairwoman Susan Bass Levin, also the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Commissioner. "This region is expecting to see a 70 percent increase in jobs over the next 15 years and billions of dollars in annual wealth as a result. In the face of so much change, the region must be proactive in shaping its own economic destiny."

The NJMC's 2007 Economic Growth Plan uses the agency's role as a regional policy maker to guide a sound economic path for the region. It follows initiatives and ideas discussed during the Meadowlands Economic Summit and Conference held in September 2006.

This report expounds on five recommendations to promote the economic growth of the Meadowlands. They are coordinating and unifying the region's message for economic growth; developing and preparing the workforce for a growing number of jobs; maintaining, developing and upgrading the infrastructure of the region; targeting and encouraging specific sectors for future economic growth; and increasing overall efficiency within the Meadowlands District. To implement these initiatives over the next 12 months, the report recommends establishing an Office of Economic Growth at the NJMC.

In addition to this new office, the report outlines activities the NJMC should take in promoting economic growth in the Meadowlands. This includes establishing a hotline for businesses seeking information on state and NJMC land use regulations, infrastructure, and business assistance programs available from state and local governments. It is also recommended that the NJMC work with the Department of Community Affairs' Office of Smart Growth to ensure the planning strategies of the NJMC and its municipalities are

consistent with the principles of smart growth and the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

More aggressive policies regarding waste disposal and renewable energy are also recommended. This includes the NJMC furthering the region's independence from traditional energy sources while reducing greenhouse gas emission impacts on the environment, which follows up on the agency's recent renewable energy initiatives and commitment to following the goals outlined in the Kyoto Protocol.

Finally, the Economic Growth Study calls for the NJMC to establish a business incubator to further facilitate the location of businesses and future industries into the Meadowlands District that comply with Governor Corzine's Economic Growth strategies for the state. The incubator will provide new businesses with office space and a direct connection to government resources. It will be geared toward small, local businesses owned by women and minorities.

In addition, the NJMC signed an agreement to create the Meadowlands Workforce Development Consortium, which will include the NJMC, the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Workforce Investment Boards of Hudson and Bergen counties, Bergen County Community College, Hudson County Community College and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The Consortium will assess the current trends of employment in the Meadowlands and try to accommodate the skill needs to address future job growth.

"The recommendations outlined in the Economic Growth Plan open the door for better coordination of our activities, as well as our outreach to our District municipalities," said NJMC Executive Director Bob Ceberio. "We have a vast number of resources, from the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce to Rutgers University to the hard-working people in our municipalities, to help make sure this region continues to grow and move forward. We must work together to provide efficient and responsive services for our businesses and residents."

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